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MANY-SIDED PULITZER BY ONE WHO KNEW HIM

By JAMES B. TOWNSEND.

"Return at once to office, Joseph Pulitzer has bought the paper." This was the telegram that I received May 1, 1883, while attending the funeral of a relative in Rutland, Vt., for which sad duty I had been excused for three days from my editorial work on The New York World under the late William Henry Hurlbert by the then managing editor, John Gilmer Speed, who, too, has joined the majority.

The summons was so abrupt and so unlike the comparatively easy-going slower methods of the journalism of that day that it startled me. I realized at once that while the words were Speed's, the impulse that directed the sending of the telegram was another's, and on my journey on a night train to New York I tried to recall what I had heard of this Joseph Pulitzer, and to paint a mental picture of what manner of man he was.

It was not long before I learned. On arrival at the old World building on Park Row, in New York City—then only recently erected—I hardly knew the place to be the same as that I had left, after some years' service, only three days earlier. It seemed as if a cyclone had entered the building, completely disarranging everything, and had passed away, leaving confusion worse confounded.

The atmosphere of the entire building was one of excitement and suspense, men were hurrying to and fro, all with tense faces, messenger boys were wildly leaving in droves, and nothing was as it had been. Joining the other members of the old editorial staff, who were huddled together in one corner of the sitting room—all with anxious and excited expressions—I timidly asked what was the matter.

"You will know soon enough, young man," replied Mr. Speed. "The new boss will see you in five minutes," and, with an upward glance and deprecatory gesture he added, "After us the deluge—prepare to meet the fate."

It was not long before my audience with the new chief came and I was summoned into his presence. Well do I recollect the tall, spare form, neatly clothed in a frock coat and gray trousers, the thin straggly reddish beard, the tangled mass of reddish hair, and the incisive glance through the near-sighted eyeglasses that seemed to take my measure in an instant and pierced into my timid soul.

"So this is Mr. T.," said Mr. Pulitzer. "Well, sir, you've heard that I am the new chief of this newspaper; I have already introduced new methods—new ways I propose to galvanize this force; are you willing to aid me? Your salary will remain the same, and you will follow the same line of work with suggestions as to change and improvement under Major Hancock, who will be managing editor after Mr. Speed leaves."

To my faltering assurance—for I felt as if the breath had left me, from the rapidity and vigor of Mr. Pulitzer's utterances—that I would willingly remain a member of the staff—he simply nodded and said, "Good, I like you, get to work." That was all. That was the beginning of nearly ten years' active service for and with Joseph Pulitzer, and of a warm friendship which lasted until his death—although one which of late years I could not cultivate on my part, owing to the exigencies of business life, his blindness, and long absence from New York.

The manner of my first acquaintance with and real knowledge of Joseph Pulitzer has been described, to indicate the man's tremendous, and almost unique, quickness of action and force of character and temperament. He was, during his active business career, in very truth a "human dynamo." In my long journalistic life and consequent wide acquaintance—often intimate acquaintance—with the more prominent men of the period, the brainiest that I have known were James McCosh, the late president of Princeton, Robert G. Ingersoll and Joseph Pulitzer.

These all were men not only of surpassing intellect but of force, but Mr. Pulitzer added to the intellectual of Dr. McCosh and the wide cultivation and knowledge of Ingersoll, all of which qualities he himself possessed, an alertness of mind and body that the other two did not possess.

He seemingly never tired in the early days of The World's upbuilding. He reached the office in the morning, frequently before any of the members of his staff appeared, and I have often gone up town with him again at early morning and after the paper had gone to press, and the last lingering night editor and copy reader and reporter had departed.

He was everywhere in the office—appearing most unexpectedly and at odd times, now arguing with a reporter in the city room on some story—now dashing into the composing room to give orders, flashing back into the counting room and even descending like a whirlwind upon the market re-

The Stir the Editor Made When He Dashed Into New York and the Stir He Kept on Making All His Life Described by a Former Member of His Staff.

porter to wax warm over some question of the number of cattle the said editor had stated to have arrived from the West the previous day.

He loved nothing better than argument, which he almost invariably began himself by some negative or positive assertion, and during the course of which he keenly noted his opponent's bearing and manner of speech, while never losing track for an instant of the main theme himself. "It is by argument," he said to me, "that I measure a man, note his shortcomings, and possession or lack of logic, and, above all, whether he has the courage of his convictions, for no man can long work for me with satisfaction to himself or myself unless he has this courage."

It was not many weeks, hardly days, before the new World under Joseph Pulitzer had struck a new gait. The old staff was quickly weeded out, and new faces took the place of those long familiar in the old city and editorial rooms.

We in the office felt from the first that his remarkable personality, which had so impressed us on its arrival inside the building, would soon make its impression on the great cosmopolitan public of New York, and in time upon the country, and we were not mistaken.

In a week's time the new World under Joseph Pulitzer was a bull in a china shop of New York journalism. It began to smash traditions, customs, and ideas like the proverbial animal did the china. The public first wondered, then gasped, then condemned or admired the new journalism—and attacks upon it and upon its founder began in the other newspapers, but Mr. Pulitzer had succeeded, as he afterward told me, in a shorter space of time than even he had dreamed of in gaining what he most desired—publicity for his new venture.

I well remember his calling me one morning and saying, "How many people do you suppose there in the state of Connecticut that can be reached under present conditions by The World on Sunday mornings; and if so reached would buy and read the paper?" I hazarded a wild guess, for one had to reply quickly to Mr. Pulitzer, and was betide one if the reply seemed to him illogical, vague or foolish.

Fortunately for me my guess pleased him, and he said, "Good, now appoint a correspondent in every town that has 30,000 or more people and instruct them to send to each Sunday edition 500 words of social doings in their town and to mention just as many names of people as possible. People like to see their names in a newspaper, especially if pleasantly mentioned—get in all this copy, read it yourself and watch the results."

I did, at a cost of long hours and much energy, and in one month the World's circulation in New Connecticut had increased 50 per cent, in six months 100 per cent, and it moved up by leaps and bounds from that time.

Then came the advent of Colonel John Cockerill, the ablest lieutenant in The World's upbuilding that Mr. Pulitzer had, a man of rare ability and force and who had been closely associated with Mr. Pulitzer on The Post-Dispatch and had imbibed a thorough knowledge of his methods, aims and wishes. It has always been to me a most regrettable incident in Mr. Pulitzer's career that he should have some years afterward parted with Colonel Cockerill over some personal differences but, which had it not been for some malign outside influence—could have been adjusted.

The incident, however, produced the famous remark made by Mr. Pulitzer when someone asked him how he could get along without Colonel Cockerill: "The indispensable man is not numerous."

But although Mr. Pulitzer in this unfortunate occurrence was blamed by Colonel Cockerill's admirers and friends and called unjust, he really was a just man, and I have never known him to wilfully act unjust despite the fact that, owing to his wide range of activity and the constant impossibility of looking carefully into all matters, and in his latter years to his blindness, he may at times have appeared to have acted so. He was quick to decide and quick to act, and as to err is human, he frequently made mistakes of judgment, but he subscribed to the old belief, "For justice a temple and all seasons summer," and I have known him to reverse his position on matters political, business and social without hesitation when he found he had made a

wrong decision.

I recall especially his change of attitude in the now almost forgotten sensational case of Loubat vs. the Union Club when, after siding with Mr. Loubat's (now the Duke Loubat) enemies and writing vigorously against him, he later espoused his cause and became his friend.

As a newcomer to New York at that period, passing from a large town to a metropolis, and one in which old traditions still lingered, it took some little time for Mr. Pulitzer to, as it were, "get his balance." He was, as soon as his strength and personality and probable influence were fully recognized, besieged by place and fortune hunters, would-be parasites, and people who, to serve their own selfish ends, were only too willing to mislead him, especially as to matters social.

For this reason, or more from the fact that he played with traditions and shocked old-time ideas of propriety in newspaper publications, he was savagely criticised and attacked, and a determined effort was made to bar all social doors both to himself and family. The attack on the Cleveland bond issue brought him the will of the financial powers, and this added to the enmity of some persons of great social influence, upon whose toes he had wittingly or unwittingly trod, combined to make his social pathway for a time a rocky one.

Few old newspaper men or readers will forget the late Charles A. Dana's editorial protest in The Sun against Mr. Pulitzer's appearance in a Metropolitan Opera box, in which, after a virulent personal criticism of his appearance Mr. Dana said, "Move on, Joseph Pulitzer, move on," nor Mr. Pulitzer's quiet reply a few days later in The World, in which he described in one column the marvelous growth and circulation of influence in business of The World in the past year, and in the next gave some figures which argued the dwindling circulation of The Sun, with the story of a mortgage upon the building, and headed the entire story, "Moving On."

For Joseph Pulitzer was a fighter and it is hard to imagine a more aggressive personality than was his during the decade, especially from 1883 to 1893. While it was Colonel Cockerill who suggested and outlined the cartoon of Belshazzar's feast, which it was always thought played a great part in the defeat of Mr. Blaine in the memorable Blaine campaign, it was Mr. Pulitzer who ordered it published against the protests of some of the more timid members of his staff.

It was he alone who conceived the idea of opening a public subscription for the building of the pedestal of the Earthhold statue—probably the most successful circulation building idea that any American newspaper man has devised. It is not necessary to recall the many achievements of The World due to Mr. Pulitzer's fertile brain and phenomenal discernment of the trend of the currents of public opinion.

His vision into the near and the further future, especially in matters political, was at times to those of us who were near him almost ghostlike, and although he sometimes failed as to his predictions, these occasions were far more than overbalanced by their successful working out.

He was a man extremely impatient of contradictions, and during his later years of blindness he was contradicted on some favorite idea or theory made him exceedingly irritable, and yet he liked not the man who always agreed with him. This was one cause of his frequent change of the paid secretaries, readers, etc., who attended him and who, by their presence, conversation, and reading "lightened his darkness"—so far as such darkness to a man of his boundless energy, great ambition and constant thirst for knowledge, and upon whom consequently the burden of this most terrible of all human afflictions most heavily fell—could be lightened.

Some years after I had left the active service of The World, with personal regret and kind and appreciative words from Mr. Pulitzer to better my fortunes, I was invited to accompany him—and this after he had been blind for a time, on two separate long ocean voyages as his guest, and passed most of his time in his society—walking with him at morning and afternoon on deck in all but the very stormiest of weathers, and talking with or reading to him at afternoon or evening.

I found in this renewed intimate acquaintanceship, after a lapse of some

six or seven years, the same intellectual power, the same great brain, that I had known when he was actively in The World office. During our conversations I marveled constantly to find this virtually totally blind man thoroughly equipped—and only through the eyes of others—to discuss not only the leading business, political and social topics of the day, but even minor ones in which we both happened to be particularly interested.

After his blindness he cultivated an already remarkable knowledge of art and its history, and could talk most ably upon the characteristics and qualities of not only our leading American sculptors and painters, but of the old masters. He was especially fond of portraits of distinguished men, notably those by famous painters, and it is not generally known that in his beautiful New York residence there is the nucleus of a remarkable collection of great portraits by great men.

He especially admired the work of John Sargent, who may be truly called "the modern Velasquez," and his ambition would not rest until he had that modern master paint the portraits of both Mrs. Pulitzer and himself. It may be noted here that Sargent's bust portrait of Mr. Pulitzer, shown at the Windsor Academy in New York two years ago, and which has been frequently reproduced before and at the time of his death, is considered by some of Sargent's admirers as perhaps the most sympathetic portrait the artist ever painted. If there be anything in telepathy, it would seem as if Mr. Pulitzer's ambition to have his features perpetuated by the great portraitist influenced the latter so strongly that he produced a most perfect presentment, not only of the man's appearance, but almost of his soul seen through the sightless eyes.

The dead editor was also a great lover of music and one of unusual taste and appreciation; he loved to talk on music, and nothing so soothed him as its strains. In his New York, Bay Harbor and Jekyll Island houses he had among his attendants a skilled pianist, and devoted sometimes several hours a day to listening to Wagner, whom of all other composers he preferred, and other great musicians. He was a frequent attendant at the opera and concerts, although the restlessness of body, which increased during his later years, made it difficult for him to sit for any length of time in a public place.

At all times an exceedingly nervous man, after his blindness he became almost a monomaniac on the subject of noise. As has been told, he had virtually sound-proof apartments built in his city residence, and during the years, on which he voyaged on ocean steamers, and before the launching of his own great yacht, the Liberty, three years ago, he would reserve cabins on the upper deck, with the proviso that the deck should be roped off on the side on which were his sleeping rooms and covered with cocoa matting.

During these long voyages it was his custom to have a secretary read to him every morning the main features from the news columns of the latest papers obtainable before departure and those of what newspapers could be obtained en route, and then listen to selections from the editorial columns of the same from another secretary. Later he walked several miles, always with a companion, during which walks he discussed topics of personal mutual interest.

After luncheon and a nap another secretary frequently read to him in German, and then after some music came an hour's reading of history, and again after dinner two or more hours were devoted to the latest fiction—for Mr. Pulitzer loved the novel—and a discussion of the same. I well remember on a memorable voyage to Genoa in 1905 on the Celtic reading to him the then popular "Lady Rose's Daughter," of Mrs. Humphrey Ward, and his keen interest in the plot and clever incisive analysis of Julie Lespinasse's character.

He kept himself thoroughly in touch with the religious tendencies of the times. Not a deeply religious man himself, while he subscribed to no special creed, I never heard him speak in other than praise of the good religion has done for the world. His views were broad and, like all great men that I have met, I should say that his belief was that of the higher agnosticism.

A devoted father, he was deeply interested in the future of his children and in the manner and matter of their education, and he talked more frequently with me upon this subject during our last voyage together than any other. He was proud of his wife's beauty and cleverness, of his daughters' fairness, and as to his sons, although he argued with me against some little diversions of the young of today, I could discern his

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pride in some of his son's achievements in athletics, against the preponderance of which our college life he strongly admonished. A great journalist, a rarely many-sided man, a curious mingling of qualities, a marvel of the union of physical force and mental energy and a rare intellect, have passed in the death of Joseph Pulitzer.